

Testimony on the EMS Operations Fund
Donald L. DeVries, Chair, Emergency Medical Services Board
Before the
Senate Public Safety, Transportation and Environment Subcommittee
Senate Health and Human Services Subcommittee
February 24, 2004

Thank you for the opportunity to meet this afternoon on the matter of the Emergency Medical System Operations Fund. I am Donald DeVries, chair of the Emergency Medical Services Board since its inception in 1993. Among a broad array of responsibilities mandated to ensure the effective coordination of emergency medical services in Maryland, the EMS Law requires that the Board review and approve the budgets of the services by the Fund. The Board considers itself to be the guardian of the Fund. This is a task that we assume very seriously and a source of revenue that we guard judiciously. Melding our review of the budgets with the programmatic oversight of the EMS system assists us in meeting our obligations to effectively coordinate EMS in Maryland.

To put the Fund in its proper context, we should recall the early 1990's when difficult economic times threatened the budgets of EMS agencies and all of state government. Staff and valued programs in the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems, the Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute, the state's Medevac program and the Amoss Fund would have been substantially reduced. Advances of the 1980's and Maryland's acknowledged place as national leader in emergency medical services were threatened.

Governor Schaefer and the General Assembly responded to establish dedicated funding for EMS in the form of a motor vehicle registration fee surcharge. The message was made clear that public safety and emergency medical services must be isolated from the impact of economic fluctuations. That was the overriding reason the EMS Operations Fund was created.

The EMS Board is responsible for the review and approval of the budgets of the MIEMSS, MFRI, the Shock Trauma Center, and the Aviation Division of the Maryland State Police. The Board's prudent management of the Fund is best illustrated by the fact that the Fund sustained these agencies as well as the William

Amoss Fund without any fee increases for nearly ten year. The increase that was approved in 2001, necessitated in large part by decisions made outside of the Board review and approval process, will sustain the Fund well into the next decade. The Fund now supports a low-interest loan fund for local fire and rescue companies to replace outdated facilities and equipment, and is funding major renovations necessary for the Shock Trauma Center to remain the centerpiece of EMS trauma care.

Since FY 2003, the Fund has supported upgrades and maintenance for the MEDEVAC fleet to enhance safety and extend the life expectancy of the aircraft. MFRI has gained program enhancements and new program offerings that reach more students. MIEMSS has expanded centralized communications capabilities, increased funding support for Advanced Life Support training, and upgraded its Information Technology office. All components have met their mandates and have been able to address many of the newer challenges related to homeland security.

The registration fee surcharge has been a reliable source of revenue for the emergency medical services system. The designation of these dedicated funds has provided a consistent revenue source, in large part protected from economic fluctuations, for what is considered by Maryland's citizens to be an essential public safety service provided at a relatively inexpensive cost. The agencies in the Fund have weathered the economic downturns of the last several years. This was especially important as the downturn coincided with the events of September 11, 2001. Few could argue that \$11 per year is an incredible bargain and wonderful investment for the peace of mind that Maryland's EMS system brings.

I know that I speak for the entire EMS community when I emphasize how grateful all of us are for the legislation that has provided special funding for the EMS system and for the support of the Governor and legislature over the years.

I now invite any questions you may have of me or the other Fund representatives here today.

Testimony
EMS Operations Fund
Donald L. DeVries
Chair, Emergency Medical Service Board
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Education and Economic Development
Subcommittee on Public Safety and Administration
March 4, 2004

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Maryland State Police. The Board's prudent management of the Fund is best illustrated by the fact that the Fund sustained these agencies as well as the William Amoss Fund without any fee increases for nearly ten year. The increase that was approved in 2001, necessitated in large part by decisions made outside of the Board review and approval process, will sustain the Fund well into the next decade. The Fund now supports a low-interest loan fund for local fire and rescue companies to replace outdated facilities and equipment, and has supported major renovations necessary for the Shock Trauma Center to remain the centerpiece of EMS trauma care.

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